

CHAPTER 21

Ver. 1. *The king's heart [is] in the hand of the Lord, [as] the rivers of water,* etc.] The heart of every king, and all that is in it, his thoughts, counsels, purposes, and designs; the hearts of bad kings, as Pharaoh, whom the Lord hardened and softened at pleasure; the antichristian kings, into whose hearts he put it to give their kingdoms to the beast, (⁶¹⁷¹⁷ Revelation 17:17); the hearts of good kings, as David, Solomon, Cyrus, and others: and if the hearts of kings are in the hands of the Lord, which are full of things of the greatest importance with respect to the government of the world; and which are generally more untractable and unmanageable; and who are more resolute and positive, and will have their own wills and ways, especially arbitrary princes; then much more the hearts of other persons. And which are as “rivers of water”; for so the words may be rendered, as rivers of water is “the heart of a king”, which is “in the hand of the Lord”; unstable, fluid, and fluctuating; and yet the Lord can stay and settle, and fix them, and keep them steady and within bounds: or which, like a torrent of water, comes with force and impetus; and so the Septuagint render it, “the force of waters”; and bears all before it, as do the wills of despotic kings; and yet these the Lord can stop and bound, and rule and overrule: or like rivers of water, reviving and refreshing, so is the heart of a good king, full of wisdom and prudence, of integrity and faithfulness, of clemency and goodness; the streams of whose bounty and kindness flow among his subjects, to their great pleasure and profit; so Christ, the King of kings, is said to be as “rivers of water”, (²³⁰⁰ Isaiah 32:2). The allusion is to gardeners, that make channels for the water to run in, to water their gardens; or to husbandmen, that cut aqueducts from rivers, to water their fields; or to the turning of the course of rivers, as Euphrates was by Cyrus, when he took Babylon. The heart of a king is as much at the dispose of the Lord, and can be turned by him as easily as such canals may be made, or the course of a river turned; for it follows:

he turneth it whithersoever he will; contrary to their first designs, and to answer another purpose; oftentimes towards his people, and for the good of his cause and interest, which they never designed; and to bring about such things as were out of their view. And so, in conversion, the Lord can turn the hearts of men as he pleases; their understanding, will, and affections, are in his hands: he can make the understanding light which was

darkness, and so turn it from darkness to light; he can take off the stiffness of the will, and turn it from its bias and bent, and make it willing to that which is good in the day of his power: he can turn the channel and course of the affections from sinful lusts and pleasures, to himself, his son, his truths, word, worship, ordinances, and people; he can take out of the heart what he pleases, its ignorance, hardness, enmity, unbelief, pride, and vanity; and he can put in what he pleases, his fear, his laws, his Spirit, and the gifts and graces of if; he can change and turn it just as he will; he that made the heart can operate upon it, and do with it as seems good in his sight. The Heathens very wrongly call one of their deities Verticordia^{f569}, from the power of turning the heart they ascribe to it; however, this shows their sense, that to turn the heart is the property of deity.

Ver. 2. *Every way of a man [is] right in his own eyes*, etc.] This is repeated, from (~~2010~~ Proverbs 16:2,25); for the confirmation of it; and that it might be observed and taken notice of, and men be brought under a conviction of it; which is not easily done, it being what affects all men: every man is conceited of himself and his own way, and is not easily persuaded off of it; his sinful ways are agreeable to him promising him pleasure, profit, or honour; and his self-righteous ways suit with the vain opinion he has of himself, whereby he promises himself eternal life and happiness. The Septuagint and Arabic versions render it to this sense,

“every man seems righteous to himself;”

but the Lord pondereth the hearts: weighs them in the balance of righteousness and truth; considers them, having a perfect knowledge of them, and all the springs of action in them; and knows that every way of man is not right, though they may seem so to him.

Ver. 3. *To do justice and judgment*, etc.] The moral duties of religion, what is holy, just, and good, which the law requires; what is agreeably to both tables, piety towards God, and justice to men; that which is just and right between man and man; which, especially if done from right principles and with right views,

[is] more acceptable to the Lord than sacrifice; not than any sacrifice; than the sacrifice of a broken heart, or the sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving, or of acts of goodness and beneficence, or of a man’s whole self to the Lord; but than ceremonial sacrifices; which, though of divine institution, and typical of Christ, and when offered up in the faith of him,

were acceptable to God, while in force; yet not when done without faith and in hypocrisy, and especially when done to cover and countenance immoral actions; and, even when compared with moral duties, the latter were preferable to them; (see ^{<0152>}1 Samuel 15:22) (^{<4123>}Mark 12:33).

Ver. 4. *An high look, and a proud heart*, etc.] The former is a sign of the latter, and commonly go together, and are both abominable to the Lord; (see ^{<0410>}Psalm 101:5 ^{<2166>}Proverbs 6:16,17). A man that looks above others, and with disdain upon them, shows that pride reigns in him, and swells his mind with a vain opinion of himself; this may be observed in every self-righteous man; the parable of the Pharisee and publican is a comment upon it; sometimes there may be a proud heart under a disguise of humility; but the pride of the heart is often discovered by the look of the eyes. It may be rendered, “the elevation of the eyes, and the enlargement of the heart”^{f570}; but not to be understood in a good sense, of the lifting up of the eyes in prayer to God, with faith and fear; nor of the enlargement of the heart with solid knowledge and wisdom, such as Solomon had; but in a bad sense, of the lofty looks and haughtiness of man towards his fellow creatures, and of his unbounded desires after filthy lucre or sinful lusts: the Targum renders it,

“the swelling of the heart,”

with pride and vanity;

[and] the ploughing of the wicked [is] sin; taken literally; not that it is so in itself; for it is a most useful invention, and exceeding beneficial to mankind, and is to be ascribed to God himself; and of this the Heathens are so sensible, that they have a deity to whom they attribute it, and whom they call Ceres^{f571}, from **çrj**, to plough; it only denotes that all the civil actions of a wicked man, one being put for all, are attended with sin; he sins in all he does. Or, metaphorically, for his schemes, contrivances, and projects, which are the ploughing of his mind; these are all sinful, or tend to that which is so. Some understand this particularly of his high look and proud heart, which are his ploughing and his sin; Ben Melech; and others of his ploughing, or persecuting and oppressing, the poor. The word is sometimes used for a lamp or light, and is so rendered here by some, “the light of the wicked [is] sin”^{f572}; their outward happiness and prosperity leads them into sin, involves them in guilt, and so brings them to ruin and

destruction: and this way go the Targum: Septuagint, Vulgate Latin, Syriac, and Arabic versions.

Ver. 5. *The thoughts of the diligent [tend] only to plenteousness*, etc.] A man that is thoughtful and studious, and wisely forms schemes in his mind, and diligently pursues them; the issue of it is, generally speaking, prosperity and plenty: such a man is usually thriving and flourishing; and this holds good in things spiritual, as well as in things temporal, (⁴¹⁵³Matthew 25:29);

but of everyone [that is] hasty only to want; that is in haste to be rich, and is resolved to be so, right or wrong, he comes at last to poverty and want: or he who is rash and precipitate in acting, who never thinks before he acts, but rashly engages in an affair; or, however, does not give himself time enough to think it over, but, as soon as ever it has entered his thoughts, he immediately attempts to put it in execution; a man so thoughtless and inconsiderate, so rash and hasty, brings himself and family to poverty; (see ⁴¹¹¹Proverbs 20:21).

Ver. 6. *The getting of treasures by a lying tongue*, etc.] By telling lies in trade; by bearing false witness in a court of judicature; or by preaching false doctrines in the church of God:

[is] a vanity tossed to and fro of them that seek death: such treasures, though ever so great, are like any light thing, smoke or vapour, straw, stubble, chaff, or a feather, tossed about the wind; which is expressive of the instability uncertainty of riches ill gotten; they do not last long, but are taken away and carried off by one providence or another; and they are likewise harmful and pernicious; they issue in death: and those that seek after them, and obtain them in a bad way, are said to “seek death”: not intentionally, but eventually; this they certainly find, if grace prevent not; see (⁴⁰⁸⁵Proverbs 8:36). Jarchi reads it, they are the “snares of death” to him; and so the Septuagint version.

Ver. 7. *The robbery of the wicked shall destroy them*, etc.] Or cut them, so Ben Melech: dissect or “saw”¹⁵⁷³ them; cut them to the heart; that is, when the sins they have been guilty of, in robbing God of his due, or doing injury to men in their properties, cheating them or stealing from them, are set home on their consciences, they are in the utmost agonies and distress; it is as if a saw was drawn to and fro over them, and will be their case for ever without true repentance: this is the worm that never dies, and the fire that

is never quenched; this is everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and is very just and righteous;

because they refuse to do judgment; to do that which is just between man and man, to let everyone enjoy his own property: as it is true of private robbers, so of men in public offices, whose business it is to defend men in the quiet possession of property; which, if they refuse to do, as it is a refusal to do judgment, it is in effect a robbery of them; and will be charged on their consciences at one time or another.

Ver. 8. *The way of man [is] froward and strange*, etc.] Not the way of any and every man; not the way of righteous and good men, of believers in Christ; who know him, the way, and walk in him and after him, and being led by him; who have his spirit to be their guide, and do walk in his ways, and find pleasure in them; the way of such is not froward or perverse, but upright and even, and is not strange, for the Lord knows and approves of it: but the way of wicked and impure men, as may be learned from the opposition in the next clause; the way of unregenerate men, who are gone out of the good way, and turned to their own way, which is according to the course of the world, and after the prince of it, and according to the flesh, and dictates of corrupt nature, which is the common and broad road that leads to destruction. This is a “froward” or perverse way, a way contrary to reason and truth; contrary to the word of God, and the directions of it; it is a crooked distorted path; it is not according to rule; it is a deviation from the way of God’s commandment, and is a “strange” one; the Scriptures know nothing of it, and do not point and direct unto it; it estranges a man from God, and carries him further and further off from him. It may be rendered, “perverse [is] the way of a man, even of a stranger”^{f574}; of one that is a stranger to God and godliness; to Christ and his Gospel; to the Spirit, and the operations of his grace on the heart; to his own heart, and his state and condition by nature; and to all good men, and all that is good;

but [as for] the pure, his work [is] right. God is pure, purity itself, in comparison of whom nothing is pure; and his work in creation, providence, and grace, is right; there is no unrighteousness in him; and this sense is favoured by the Septuagint and Arabic versions: or rather every good man, who, through the pure righteousness of Christ imputed to him, and through his precious blood being sprinkled on him, or rather through being washed in it, and through the grace of God bestowed on him, is pure, wholly

cleansed from sin; has a pure heart, speaks a pure language, and holds the mystery of faith in a pure conscience or conversation: and his work, or the work of God upon him, is right and good; or his work of faith, which he exercises on God, is hearty and genuine: and even his works, as the Targum, Septuagint, Syriac, and Arabic versions, have it in the plural number; all his good works are right; being done from love, in faith, in the name and strength of Christ, and to the glory of God.

Ver. 9. [*It is*] *better to dwell in a corner of the housetop*, etc.] The roofs of houses in Judea were that, encompassed with battlements, whither persons might retire for solitude, and sit in safety: and it is better to be in a corner of such a roof alone, and be exposed to scorching heat, to blustering winds, to thunder storms and showers of rain,

than with a brawling woman in a wide house; large and spacious, full of rooms, fit for a numerous family: or, “an house of society”,^{f575}; where many families might dwell and live sociably with each other; or a house where a man, his wife and family, might dwell together, and have communion with each other; it is opposed to the corner of the housetop, and the solitariness of it; as the scolding of the brawling woman, or “a woman of contentions”,^{f576}, who is always noisy and quarrelsome, her violent passions, her storming language, and thundering voice, are to the inclemencies of the heavens, to which a man on the housetop is exposed; and yet these are more eligible than the other; see (^{AM19}Proverbs 21:19 17:1 19:13).

Ver. 10. *The soul of the wicked desireth evil*, etc.] The evil of sin, it being natural to him; he chooses it, delights in it, craves after it, under a notion of pleasure or profit: or the evil of mischief; it is a sport and pastime to him to do injury to others; (see ^{AM23}Proverbs 10:23); he desires both the one and the other with all his soul; his heart is in it, he is set upon it, which shows him to be a wicked man;

his neighbour findeth no favour in his eyes; not only he delights to do mischief to an enemy or a stranger, but even to a neighbour and friend; he will do him no kindness, though he asks it of him; he will show him no mercy, though an object of it; he will spare him not, but do him an injury, if he attempts to hinder or dissuade him from doing mischief, or reproves him for it.

Ver. 11. *When the scorner is punished*, etc.] Either by the immediate hand of God, or by the civil magistrate; he who scoffs at Deity, blasphemes the most High, mocks at all religion, despises dominion, and speaks evil of dignities:

the simple is made wise; who is weak and foolish, easily persuaded and drawn into sin, yet not hardened in it, but open to reproof and conviction; he takes notice of the punishment of scorners, and takes warning from it, and behaves more wisely and cautiously for the future; (see ~~20825~~ Proverbs 19:25);

and when the wise is instructed; by others, superior to him in wisdom; by the ministers of the Gospel, by reading and hearing the word of God, and the writings of good men; or by corrections and chastisements:

he receiveth knowledge; the wise man receives it, he attends to the instruction given him, and improves in knowledge: or rather the simple man gains knowledge by the instructions given to wise men; he learns by them, as well as by what he is taught himself. It is by some rendered, “when the wise prospers, he receiveth knowledge”ⁱ⁵⁷⁷ the simple man learns much both from the adversity and prosperity of others; and to this sense is the note of Gersom,

“when he sees how the ways of a wise man prosper, then he studies to get knowledge.”

Ver. 12. *The righteous [man] wisely considereth the house of the wicked*, etc.] Not so much the stately palace he lives in, and the furniture of it, as the glory, splendour, riches, and largeness of his family; the flourishing condition he and they are in: he considers how they came into it, the short continuance of it, and what the end will be, which in a short time will be ruin and destruction; and therefore he does not envy their present happiness, or fret at it. Gersom renders it,

“the righteous maketh the house of the wicked to prosper;”

as Joseph did Potiphar’s, and Jacob Laban’s; or rather the Lord made them to prosper for their sakes. Jarchi interprets the righteous of God himself; who gives his heart, or has it in his heart to cut off the house of the wicked, as follows;

[but God] overthroweth the wicked for [their] wickedness; or removes them into evil, as the Targum; into the evil of punishment, for the evil of sin. Aben Ezra supplies the word “God”, as we do; and understands it of God’s destroying wicked men for their sins, though they have flourished for a while in this world: but some interpret it of the righteous man, even of a righteous magistrate, who is prudent and diligent in his office; who looks into the houses of wicked men, and inquires who they are that are in them, and how they live; and what they have in their houses, whether stolen goods, the properties of others; or arms, either for treasonable practices or for robberies; and takes them and punishes them according to the laws of God and men.

Ver. 13. *Whoso stoppeth his ears at the cry of the poor*, etc.] For want of bread; or, “of the weak”, as the Septuagint and other versions; for want of help and protection, when in the greatest distress; and, with the most pressing importunity, entreats his assistance, and yet refuses to hear him out: or, if he does, will not relieve him, which is all one as if he heard him not, or denied him a hearing;

he also shall cry himself; the Targum and Syriac version add, “unto God”. The sense is, that even such an one shall be brought into the like distressed circumstances, when he shall make application to God, and to his fellow creatures, for relief and assistance:

but shall not be heard; a deaf ear will be turned to him by both: the same measure he has measured shall be measured to him again; no mercy shall be shown to an unmerciful man, either by God or man; see (³¹²³James 2:13).

Ver. 14. *A gift in secret pacifieth anger*, etc.] Appeases an angry man; humbles and “brings [his anger] down”^{f578}, as Aben Ezra and Gersom observe the word signifies; which before rose very high, and showed itself in big words and disdainful looks, as proud wrath does; or extinguishes it, as the Targum and Vulgate Latin version render it, and very fitly. Anger is a fire in the breast; and a restraining or causing it to cease is properly expressed by an extinguishing of it: this a gift or present does, as it did in Esau from Jacob, in David from Abigail; but then it must be secretly given, otherwise it may more provoke; since it may show vanity in the giver, and covetousness in the receiver; and the former may have more honour than the latter. Some understand this of a gift for a bribe to a judge, to abate the severity of the sentence; and others of alms deeds to the poor, to pacify the anger of God^{f579}: Jarchi interprets it of alms; and the Jews write this

sentence upon the poor's box, understanding it in this sense; but the first sense is best;

and a reward in the bosom strong wrath: the same thing in different words; the meaning is, that a reward or gift, secretly conveyed into the bosom of an angry man, pacifies his wrath, when at the greatest height. The Septuagint, Syriac, and Arabic versions, understand it in a quite different sense, of a gift retained in the bosom, and not given, and render it thus, "he that spareth gifts stirreth up strong wrath".

Ver. 15. [*It is*] *joy to the, last to do judgment*, etc.] It is with pleasure he does it; he delights in the law of God, after the inward man, and finds much peace of mind and joy in the Holy Ghost in keeping it, and observing its commands, which are holy, just, and good; yea, it gives him pleasure to see justice done by others; both by private persons in their dealings with one another; and especially by judges putting the laws in execution, as their office requires; whereby much good comes to a nation in general, and to particular persons;

but destruction [shall be] to the workers of iniquity; that make a trade of sinning; whose whole life is a continued series of sin and iniquity; who take much pains in committing sin, and are constant at it; everlasting destruction is in their ways, and they lead unto it: or, "terror"^{f580} shall be to them; terror of mind now at times, in opposition to the joy and peace a good man finds; and dreadful horror at death and to all eternity: or, as it is joy to a just man to see public justice done, and good laws put in execution, it is a terror to evildoers, (^{f513B}Romans 13:3).

Ver. 16. *The man that wandereth out of the way of understanding*, etc.] The way of getting understanding, the good ways and word of God; that wanders from the house of God, the assembly of the saints, where the Gospel is preached, and the ordinances are administered; that, instead of attending on them, where he might gain the understanding of divine and spiritual things, wanders about in the fields, gets into bad company, walks with them in their ways, and turns to his own, as a sheep that goes astray: he

shall remain in the congregation of the dead; among those that are spiritually dead, dead in trespasses and sins; such an one he himself is, and such he is like to continue, and not be written among the living in Jerusalem; or among those who die the second and eternal death, among

the damned in hell; so Jarchi interprets it of the congregation of hell; and a large congregation that will be, but dreadful to have an abode with them. The words are rendered by the Septuagint, and the versions that follow that, “shall rest in the congregation of the giants”; which some interpret of devils, and others of the giants of the old world^{f581}, damned spirits: resting with them does not design peace and quietness, for there will be none there; but a fixed settled abode, in opposition to wandering, in the preceding clause.

Ver. 17. *He that loveth pleasure [shall be] a poor man*, etc.] Or “sport”^{f582} and pastime, music and dancing, cards and dice, hunting and hawking, and other sensual gratifications; a man that indulges himself in these things, and spends his time and his money in such a way, is very likely to be a poor man, and generally is so in the issue;

he that loveth wine and oil shall not be rich; that is, that loves them immoderately; otherwise in moderation they may be both loved and used; “wine” and “oil” are put for high living, luxurious feasts, costly entertainments; which being so, and continually made, will not suffer a man to be rich. The sense is, that an epicure, one that makes a god of his belly, that is both a winebibber and a glutton, that indulges to rich eating and drinking, in course lessens his substance, and leaves little for his heir: and this holds good with respect to spiritual as to temporal things; such persons are poor, and not rich in spiritual things, that indulge to carnal pleasure, and the gratification of their sensual appetite.

Ver. 18. *The wicked [shall be] a ransom for the righteous*, etc.] Not to make satisfaction for them, as Christ is a ransom for his people; but as a ransom is in the room of another, so the wicked cometh in the stead of the righteous, and into the trouble he is delivered from; as Haman for Mordecai, which instance Jarchi mentions; (see ^{<0108>}Proverbs 11:8); or when a body of people are threatened with divine vengeance; and this falls upon the wicked, whose sins caused it, and the righteous are delivered from it; as in the case of Achan, and the seven sons of Saul, (^{<0125>}Joshua 7:26 ^{<0101>}2 Samuel 21:1-6). And sometimes God turns the wrath of the princes of the earth from his own people, and causes it to fall upon the wicked, and so they are a ransom for them; as Sennacherib intended the destruction of the Jews, but was called off in providence to fall upon the Egyptians, Ethiopians, and Sabeans, and therefore they are said to be a ransom for them; (see ^{<0113>}Isaiah 43:3); and sometimes wicked men are the means of a

ransom or deliverance of the righteous, as Cyrus was of the Jews: and it may be considered, as the word used signifies a “cover”^{f583}, whether it will not bear this sense, that the wicked are a cover for the righteous, and oftentimes protect and defend them; so the earth helped the woman, (^{f626}Revelation 12:16);

and the transgressor for the upright; which are but different characters of the same persons, bad and good men; and the sense is the same as before.

Ver. 19. [*It is better to dwell in the wilderness*, etc.] Where persons live without shelter, and are not only exposed to storms and tempests, but to beasts of prey; where is want of the necessaries of life, and no society; where no “speech” is, as the word^{f584} for wilderness may signify; yet it is better to dwell in such a place, where no human voice is heard,

than with a contentious and an angry woman; that is always brawling and scolding, ever in a quarrelsome and angry disposition, and provoking to anger all about her; (see Gill on “^{f309}Proverbs 21:9”). In a mystical sense, it is better to be with the church in the wilderness, (^{f624}Revelation 12:14); than with the furious, bloodthirsty, and persecuting church of Rome, in all its worldly glory and splendour.

Ver. 20. [*There is a treasure to be desired*, etc.] Gold, silver, jewels, and precious stones; all sorts food, as Aben Ezra explains it, and rich and costly, raiment; all which may be lawfully desired and sought after, and, when obtained, laid up for future use; which may be spared for their own service and that of posterity: but there are riches of grace, a pearl of great price and treasure in heaven, more desirable than these, (^{f069}Matthew 6:19,20);

and oil in the dwelling of the wise; which is particularly mentioned, because a principal blessing of the land of Canaan; much used for food, and was for delight and refreshment: and something of this was in the house of every wise, provident, and industrious man, for the use of him and his family; even though he lived but in a “cottage”, as the word^{f585} signifies this is an emblem of the grace of God, which is sometimes compared to oil; which a wise man is chiefly concerned, that it may be in his heart, in his house, and in his family;

but a foolish man spendeth it up; the oil; he swallows it up at once, as soon as he has got it, and wastes and lavishes away what his wise father had provided for him. This may refer not to oil only, but to the desired treasure,

wealth, riches, substance of every sort, he is heir to and becomes possessed of; and which, in a spiritual sense, may be applied to a foolish wicked man, who misspends his time, neglects the means of grace, and all opportunities by which men grow rich and wise in spiritual things; (see ^{<4150>}Matthew 25:1-10).

Ver. 21. *He that followeth after righteousness and mercy*, etc.] Is eager, diligent, and fervent in his pursuit of these things: “after righteousness”; not a legal righteousness, such as the Jews followed after, but did not attain to; because they sought it not by faith, but as it were by the works of the law, (^{<4081>}Romans 9:31,32); by which there is no righteousness or justification before God; but an evangelical righteousness, the righteousness of Christ; (see ^{<2501>}Isaiah 51:1). To follow after it is to seek, desire, and thirst after it, (^{<4186>}Matthew 5:6 6:33); which supposes a want of righteousness, a sense of that want; a view of a righteousness without them, even in Christ; a love and liking of it, and therefore follow after it; it being pure, perfect, agreeably to the law and justice of God, which justifies now, and will answer for them in a time to come. And such follow after “mercy” or “grace”,^{f586}; seeing themselves miserable by sin, and having no merit of their own, apply to God for pardoning grace and mercy; and seek for righteousness in a way of grace, as a free gift; and for the whole of salvation in the same way, as well as for all grace and fresh supplies of it: it may be understood, in consequence of the former, of a diligent and eager performance of works of righteousness and mercy, and an earnest desire after both. And such a man

findeth life, righteousness, and honour; which is more than he is said to follow after: “life” spiritual, which he has from Christ by his Spirit, and which is owing to the grace and mercy of God; and eternal life, through the righteousness of Christ, in whom it is only to be found, and from whom all the blessings of life come; who has it in his hands to give, and does give it to all his people: “righteousness” also he finds, not in himself, nor by the works of the law, but in Christ; being directed to him by the Spirit and word of God; and an excellent finding this is; a robe of righteousness, which he lays hold upon, puts on, and rejoices in: and likewise “honour”, through relation to God and Christ; through grace received from them; by enjoying the presence of them, and being made a king and priest to God; and hereafter will be placed at Christ’s right hand, inherit the kingdom of glory, sit on the same throne with Christ, and wear the crown of life and righteousness.

Ver. 22. *A wise [man] scaleth the city of the mighty*, etc.] Which makes good what is elsewhere said, that “wisdom is better than strength”, (^{<2096>}Ecclesiastes 9:16); and sometimes more is done by prudence and wisdom, by art and cunning, by schemes and stratagems, than by power and force; especially in military affairs, and particularly in besieging and taking fortified cities; when one wise man, by his wisdom, may so order and manage things, as to be able, with a few under his command, to mount the walls of a city and take it, though defended by a mighty garrison in it. This may be applied to, our Lord Jesus Christ entering into the city of a man’s heart, possessed by the strong man armed; overcoming him, taking from him his armour, and dividing his spoil, (^{<212>}Luke 11:21,22); compare with this (^{<2094>}Ecclesiastes 9:14, 15);

and casteth down the strength of the confidence thereof; the strong walls, bulwarks, and such fortifications, in which the mighty in the city placed their confidence: and the like does Christ, when he enters into the heart of a sinner by his word and spirit; he destroys all its former strong confidences, and brings it into subjection to himself, (^{<2704>}2 Corinthians 10:4,5).

Ver. 23. *Whoso keepeth his mouth and his tongue*, etc.] Guards the one and bridles the other; is careful of what he says, that it is truth, and without dissimulation and guile; and is not injurious to the characters of men, and is not offensive and provoking; who abstains from ill and wrathful language, and which tends to stir up wrath and contention. Aben Ezra distinguishes between the mouth and tongue, and interprets it, that keeps his mouth from eating, that is, immoderately and intemperately; and his tongue from speaking evil: but it is best to understand both of the same thing, of speech or language, which when a man is careful of, he

keepeth his soul from troubles; his conscience clear of guilt and distress, and his person from being concerned in quarrels, contentions, and lawsuits, which such who give their tongues too much liberty are involved in.

Ver. 24. *Proud [and] haughty scorner [is] his name*, etc.] He shall be called a proud fool, a haughty fellow, a scornful blockhead; he shall get himself an ill name, and be treated with contempt;

who dealeth in proud wrath; whose pride shows itself in wrathful expressions and actions; who is proud and passionate in all his dealings with men, and who as it were makes a trade of pride and passion: to none

is this character more applicable than to antichrist, the man of sin, that sits in the seat of the scornful; exalts himself above all that is called God, has a mouth speaking blasphemies, and a look more stout than his fellows, and deals in proud wrath against the saints of the most High.

Ver. 25. *The desire of the slothful killeth him*, etc.] His desire after food and raiment, and riches; for because he cannot have what he desires, being unwilling to work for them, it frets and vexes him to death, or puts him upon unlawful methods to obtain them, which bring him to a shameful death; (see ^{<1334>}Proverbs 13:4);

for his hands refuse to labour; when he is ordered by his superiors, or his wants are such as call for labour; and he seems to be willing and desirous of it, necessity obliging to it, yet he cannot bring his hands to it; these do in effect say, as Aben Ezra observes, Thou shall not do it. Maimonides says this is to be understood of sloth in seeking wisdom ^{f587}.

Ver. 26. *He coveteth greedily all the day long*, etc.] The slothful man does, as he has nothing to do to employ his time and his thoughts with; he is always craving something to eat and drink, or wishing he had such an estate, or so much wealth and riches, that he might live as such and such persons do; and this is what his head runs upon all the day long;

but the righteous giveth and spareth not; not gives to the slothful, which does not restrain his desire, as Aben Ezra interprets it; but to the poor and necessitous, to proper objects; a good man will work with his hands, that he may have a sufficiency for himself and his family, and may have something to give to others that are in want; and “he spares not”, or withholds not his hands, neither from working nor from giving.

Ver. 27. *The sacrifice of the wicked [is] abomination*, etc.] That is, to the Lord, as in (^{<158>}Proverbs 15:8); and as it is here added in the Septuagint and Arabic versions;

how much more, [when] he bringeth it with a wicked mind? the Arabic version is, “with a mind alien from the law”; or when it is not brought according to law; when it is a corrupt thing, that which is torn, lame, or sick, or robbery for burnt sacrifice; when it is done with an evil intention, to cover sin, to atone for without repenting of it or forsaking it; that they may go on in sin with impunity, and be allowed to commit it; for which cause Balak and Balsam offered sacrifices, which is the instance Jarchi produces; and indeed every religious action not done in faith, and love, and

sincerity, and with a view to the glory of God, but in hypocrisy and with selfish views, in order to procure acceptance with God and justification in his sight; setting aside the righteousness, sacrifice, and satisfaction of the son of God, is done with a wicked mind, and is an abomination to the Lord. Some render it, “even though he brings it diligently”, or “with great art and skill”^{f588}; is constant at his devotion, and carries it so artfully, and with such a show of religion, as to deceive men, yet he cannot deceive the Lord.

Ver. 28. *A false witness shall perish*, etc.] As witness he shall perish in his reputation, no credit shall be given him, he shall not be admitted an evidence, or a witness in any cause, being found a false one; and as a man, he shall be punished in body or estate by the civil magistrate, and his soul shall perish eternally, unless he has true repentance for his sin: or, a witness of lies shall perish^{f589} it may be applied to any teacher of false doctrine; and to the man of sin, and his followers, that speak lies in hypocrisy; everyone that loves and makes a lie shall die the second death, and be excluded from eternal happiness, ([Ⓜ]Revelation 21:8,27);

but the man that heareth; before he speaks, and speaks what he hears, and does not devise things himself; but witnesses the truth, and nothing else, to the best of his knowledge:

speaketh constantly; invariably and consistently, what is all of a piece, and by which he ah, des; or “continually”, as Jarchi; or “for ever”; he is made use of as a witness as long as he lives, whenever there is occasion for him; the Vulgate Latin version renders it, “he speaks victory”; his testimony, being true and valid, carries the cause: it, may be applied to a faithful teacher, who hearkens to the word of God, and speaks according to that; such an one speaks out, he doctrine of the word constantly, boldly, with certainty, without any hesitation or staggering.

Ver. 29. *A wicked man hardeneth his face*, etc.] Against all corrections and reproofs of parents, masters, ministers, and others; he blushes not at sins committed, and is not ashamed of them, but glories in them: or, he “strengthens with his face”^{f590}; he puts an impudent face upon his words, and confirms them by his impudence; if he tells the most notorious lies, and says things the most shameful and scandalous, his countenance does not alter, by which he would be thought to have spoken what is right and true;

but [as for] the upright, he directeth his way; or “his ways”^{f591}; according to the various reading; the man that is upright in heart, and walks uprightly, he directs his way according to the word of God; and, if he does amiss, when sensible he is ashamed of it, and amends.

Ver. 30. [*There is no wisdom nor understanding, nor counsel against the Lord.*] No human schemes whatever, formed with the greatest wisdom and prudence, can ever prevail against God, or set aside or hinder the execution of any design of his; nothing that is pointed against his church, his cause, and interest, his truths and ordinances, in the issue shall succeed; all that are found fighters against him shall not prosper, let them be men of ever so much sagacity and wisdom; though there may be ever so many devices in a man’s heart, and these ever so well planned, they shall never defeat the counsel of the Lord; see (²³⁰²Proverbs 19:21). The Targum is,

“there is no wisdom, etc. as God’s;”

and so the Syriac version, “as the Lord’s”; there is none like his, there is none to be compared with his; there is none of any value and worth but his; all is folly in comparison of that: or there is none “before the Lord”^{f592}; no wisdom of the creature can stand before him, it presently vanishes and disappears.

Ver. 31. *The horse [is] prepared against the day of battle*, etc.] The horse is a warlike creature, and was much used formerly, as now, in war; these are prepared against the day of battle, to mount the cavalry with; and men are apt to put too great confidence in them: this is mentioned instead of all other military preparations and instruments of war;

but safety [is] of the Lord; a horse is a vain thing for safety, (¹⁹³¹⁷Psalm 33:17); victory is only of the Lord; salvation depends upon him; it is he that covers men’s heads in the day of battle, and gives them victory over their enemies: or “salvation [is] of the Lord”^{f593}; this is true of spiritual and eternal salvation, as well as of temporal salvation; it is of the Lord, Father, Son and Spirit; and so is the safety of the saints; and their final perseverance to eternal glory, which is owing to the love of God, covenant interest, security in Christ, the grace of the Spirit, and the power of God; (see ^{284B}Hosea 14:3).